

## A RESPONSE TO THE DISTURBING ARTICLE BY SAIRA KHAN: "WHY I, AS A BRITISH MUSLIM WOMAN, WANT THE BURKHA BANNED FROM OUR STREETS"<sup>1</sup>

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Right from the onset of the title we are fore-warned about the explicit content of an article by self-confessed "rule-bender" Saira Khan of *'The Apprentice'* fame.<sup>2</sup> Bad enough are the ever-growing tabloid calls for the ban of the *niqāb*, that now we have to hear these negative sentiments being echoed from the ranks within. What could possess a Muslim to stand intimately, side by side, with a people who forge a living out of the sexual objectification of women<sup>3</sup> and who desire nothing but the mutilation of Islam? What could cause a Muslim to stand in the trenches of a people who have declared war on the core values of our beautiful religion?

Do the words **'As a British Muslim woman'** provide us with an initial clue to where some of Khan's loyalties lie? We pose this question because of the unnecessary use of the term 'British' or 'English' when declaring her sentiments against the burkha. Habitually we mention this word as a benign term to denote our place of birth or permanent place of residency. Is this the case for Saira Khan? Or are the words 'British' and 'English' keenly inserted in her title to convey an underlining message? How about if we analyse the usage under the guidance of her own words, **"Even though I am so westernised, even though I'm totally English, more English than the English....."**<sup>4</sup> Khan's words provide us with a sobering understanding of what she intends by the word 'British' and how deep it has penetrated her soul. How can any Muslim declare **"I'm totally English, more English than the English,"** and not expect to find themselves standing in opposition to the teachings of Islam?! In our humble opinion, the word 'Muslim' should be taken out of the title of the article because there is nothing that reflects its teachings in her article. We think the title **WHY I, AS A BRITISH WOMAN, WANT THE BURKHA BANNED FROM OUR STREETS** would read more accurately as a title for one who has taken up verbal arms against Islām. Khan States:

**"Shopping in Harrods last week, I came across a group of women wearing black burkhas, browsing the latest designs in the fashion department. The irony of the situation was almost laughable."**<sup>5</sup> Here was

<sup>1</sup> The article appeared in the *Daily Mail* on Wednesday 23 June 2009.

<sup>2</sup> In part 11 of series 1 of *The Apprentice*, Saira Khan was confronted over being a **"self-confessed liar"**! Due to saying in her CV that she was in a position for 12 months when she was really in the position for six months! Go to 3:06 here:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n\\_l1CFLhX-E&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n_l1CFLhX-E&feature=related)

Lying is one of the worst sins in Islaam.

<sup>3</sup> Just like the owner of the tabloid paper the *Daily Express* Richard Desmond who is a porn publisher. He is also the publisher of trash celebrity magazine *OK*. At the time of purchase he owned a selection of pornographic magazines such as 'Asian Babes' (maybe this is why some would like Muslim women to take off their gown of *taqwa* so as to fulfil their vile fantasies). He is referred to as 'Dirty Des' by the satirical paper *'Private Eye'* and He is still the owner of the most popular pornographic TV channel in the UK; Television X/Fantasy Channel.

<sup>4</sup>The Guardian, Saturday 15 March 2008

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2008/mar/15/familyandrelationships.family>

<sup>5</sup> The "irony" would only be "laughable" to a woman who has been divorced (as it were) from Muslims who live by Islām and has entrenched herself within the white non-Muslim

**a group of affluent women window shopping for designs that they would never once be able to wear in public. Yet it's a sight that's becoming more and more commonplace. In hardline Muslim communities right across Britain,<sup>6</sup> the burkha and hijab - the Muslim headscarf - are becoming the norm."**

Imagine if your eyes skipped by the author's name of the above words and proceeded to absorb the cynicism interwoven in this paragraph. Would logic dictate to you that such words were authored by a believer in Allāh and His noble Messenger (*sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*), or would one naturally conclude that such verbal animosity carried all the cynical hallmarks of just another disgruntled non-Muslim. Even when the material is sourced back to the name 'Saira Khan', the battle against denial still wages on in our minds, refusing to accept that these are the words and sentiments of a Muslim.

A Muslim is one who **"submits to Allāh with tawheed and yields to Him by sincerely obeying Him and disassociates himself from Shirk and its people."**<sup>7</sup> What part of Khan's quote pays homage to this comprehensive definition of a Muslim? The point of observation here is not to perform any form of emotional-based *Takfeer* of Saira Khan, because the intelligent Muslim is free from knee-jerk *takfeer* syndrome,<sup>8</sup> rather the point is to remind every last one of us, including Saira Khan, concerning the dangers of oral flirtation with *kufr*.

**"In the predominantly Muslim enclaves of Derby near my childhood home, you now see women hidden behind the full-length robe, their faces completely shielded from view. In London, I see an increasing number of young girls, aged four and five, being made to wear the hijab to school. Shockingly, the Dickensian bone disease rickets has re-emerged in the British Muslim community because women are not getting enough vital vitamin D from sunlight because they are being consigned to life under a shroud."**

We imagine that the word "*shockingly*" is deployed here to reinforce her bias and enmity towards an aspect of Allāh's religion, despite their being little regard for factual accuracy or social relevance. What personal research has Khan undertaken to justify such an expression of disturbance? Do organisations and people of a scientific and medical background share her theatrical observations and heavily biased portrayal? Here is an excerpt from an article written on 'Scientific America' website regarding Arab women<sup>9</sup> who wear the *Hijāb*:

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arena in order to gain recognition by any means possible. As for the thousands of Muslim women who live their lives by Islām this is not "laughable."

<sup>6</sup> This is a clear example of scaremongering, for these communities are simply 'Muslim' communities, yet Khan, in her crusade against Islam adds "hardline" as if the wearing of the niqāb and jilbāb is extreme when an impartial observation would reveal that it is actually based on a normative Islamic tradition.

<sup>7</sup> *Al-Qawl al-Mufeed fi Adilati at-Tawheed* p.43

<sup>8</sup> Shaykh Sālih al-Fawzān was asked: "Are there conditions that must be fulfilled to establish someone's apostasy?" The Shaykh said in reply:

The conditions for (establishing someone's apostasy) are:

**Firstly**, that person is not excused because of ignorance, as in the case of someone who has not come across anything (of Islamic knowledge), or someone who lives in a place far away from the Muslims and has not heard anything and nothing has reached him. Such a person is not to be judged (with apostasy) until it is explained to him and made clear that his action was polytheism or disbelief.

**Secondly**, (the absence of) coercion, if he has not been forced into a statement of belief while his faith is sound in his heart and his belief system, then such a person is not to be excused because of coercion:

<sup>9</sup> Why the survey was only performed on "Arab" women, we will never know.

**But today comes news that one group seems to be at particular risk, doctors report in the journal Endocrine Practice. Arab-American women who wore the hijab (a Koran-derived dress code that includes a scarf or veil over their hair and modest dress) and didn't get enough vitamin D through their diet had half the levels of the vitamin of those who didn't adhere as closely to the dress code. There was no difference in rates of health problems linked to vitamin D deficiency, such as bone or joint pain or breaks, or muscle weakness. The study involved 87 women in Dearborn, Mich., which has a large Arab population.**<sup>10</sup>

A number of points need to be observed here:

**Firstly:** How is it that doctors, who have a lot more authority and expertise in the field of vitamin deficiencies, do not share Saira Khan's level of urgency or pressing need for radical change? Could it be perhaps that their research is of the objective dispassionate type, free from a hatred-driven agenda?

**Secondly:** If the level of concern were so great, why did the scientists explicitly say, **"We're not trying to get anyone to take off their hijab."** Therefore, are we to suppose that if there were detrimental harms caused by wearing the hijab, these scientists, who dedicate their lives to the betterment of mankind, would then neglect their moral obligation, and would refuse to warn women who cover?

**Thirdly:** The issue of Vitamin D deficiency therefore is something which affects all those who live in Europe and the West, wherein the environments lack the levels of UV rays which are found within those people's countries of origin. Hence, Vitamin D deficiency affects non-Muslims who are originally from Africa, Asia and the Middle East who do not cover at all! There are studies showing low levels of Vitamin D in practically every population you can think of except paler skinned peoples living in sunny places, yet these are more susceptible to skin cancers.<sup>11</sup> Darker skin takes longer to absorb Vitamin D than lighter skin and there are studies which show that a high percentage of non-Muslim black women had low Vitamin D. So the question has to be asked of Khan: why on earth did she single out the Muslims in this matter? The answer lies in her warped campaign against the niqāb/burkha and her willingness to use anything she can to lay her hands on in order to support her personal agenda. What are we to understand, except that

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.scientificamerican.com/blog/60-second-science/post.cfm?id=does-modest-dress-among-arab-amer-2009-02-16&sc=DD\\_20090217http://www.sciam.com/blog/60-second-science/post.cfm%3fid=does-modest-dress-among-arab-amer-2009-02-16&sc=DD\\_20090217](http://www.scientificamerican.com/blog/60-second-science/post.cfm?id=does-modest-dress-among-arab-amer-2009-02-16&sc=DD_20090217http://www.sciam.com/blog/60-second-science/post.cfm%3fid=does-modest-dress-among-arab-amer-2009-02-16&sc=DD_20090217)

<sup>11</sup> Dr Jeffrey Dach MD noted on his blog that vitamin-D deficiency is an ignored epidemic even within Florida! He states in an article entitled '*Vitamin D Deficiency, the Ignored Epidemic of the Developed World*' on 10 June 2007:

**Vitamin D Deficiency in Florida, Surely You must Be Joking:**

We all know it's a fact: Everyone in Florida gets plenty of Vitamin D from the Florida Sun. This would have been true except for the fact that as Floridians, we are all told to avoid the sun to prevent solar skin damage (brown wrinkling) and to avoid skin cancer. So the question remains, do we get enough Vitamin D from sun exposure? To answer this question, we actually measured blood Vitamin D levels, and we were surprised to discover that the **majority** showed Vitamin D deficiency (less than 20 ng/ml), or insufficiency (less than 40 ng/ml).

What if you are not fortunate to live in sunny Florida and you live up north above the Mason Dixon Line, in Boston, New York, Chicago, Canada or Scandinavia?

Northern latitudes have an even more serious vitamin D deficiency because of the lack of UV sunlight during the winter months. The angle of the sun through the atmosphere closes off the UltraViolet Light from reaching the earth.

<http://jeffreych.com/2007/06/10/vitamin-d-deficiency--by-jeffrey-dach-md.aspx>

Saira Khan's hatred for the Sharia-based *niqāb* is not rooted in the soil of sisterly concern? It appears that this aspect of Islam laid siege at Khan's heart, long before she stumbled on articles pertaining to Vitamin D deficiencies.

**"Thanks to fundamentalist Muslims and 'hate' preachers working in Britain, the veiling of women is suddenly all-pervasive and promoted as a basic religious right. We are led to believe that we must live with this in the name of 'tolerance'. And yet, as a British Muslim woman, I abhor the practice and am calling on the Government to follow the lead of French President Nicolas Sarkozy and ban the burkha in our country. The veil is simply a tool of oppression which is being used to alienate and control women under the guise of religious freedom."**

So every Muslim who believes or advocates the donning of the veil is to be labelled with the notorious, politically-hijacked term 'fundamentalist' and its partner in crime 'hate preacher'. How far is she prepared to take her mass slander, retrospectively? Is she prepared to take it back to the one who was sent with its injunction, the Messenger (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) and his companions, those who established its divine descent upon the believing women? Where is the honesty and consistency in starting these types of slanderous remarks against those who only wish to faithfully carry out its obligations or recommendations, seeking nothing but the pleasure of their Lord? Unless, Khan believes that the veil has no jurisdiction outside the borders of culture and tradition, and that the Prophet of Allāh (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wassallam*) and his noble Companions played no part in its pioneering. If this is her dispute, then we will proceed later in this response to provide unequivocal evidence to substantiate its descent from the heavens, inshāAllāh.

Saira Khan's next sentence provides us with an apparent oxymoron. She labels herself by telling us **"And yet, as a British Muslim woman,"** and then she concludes by telling us, **"I abhor the practice"**. Keeping in mind the aforementioned definition of Islām, how is it possible to reconcile the title 'Muslim' with a person who 'abhors' an aspect of Islām? Another point of observation here is the choice of word she deploys to represent the level of hatred she feels against the veil. Why did she not merely use the word 'hate' or 'detest' as opposed to 'abhor'? It seems here that 'hate' or 'detest' are not apt enough to describe the rage which roars from within. Hopefully one day Khan will reform her misplaced hatred for the *niqāb* under the wisdom of the following verse and learn that sometimes the dense fog of hatred prevents one from seeing things clearly:

وَعَسَى أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ وَعَسَى أَنْ تُحِبُّوا  
شَيْئًا وَهُوَ شَرٌّ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

**"...Perhaps you hate a thing that is best for you, and you love a thing that is bad for you. Allāh knows, while you know not."**

[al-Baqarah (2):216]

So what is the Islamic position with regards to hating something brought by the Messenger of Allāh (*sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam*)? The *Mujaddid*, Imām Muhammad Ibn 'Abdul Wahhāb, said in his work entitled *'The Ten Nullifiers of Islam'*:

إِعْلَمُ أَنَّ نَوَاقِضَ الْإِسْلَامِ عَشْرَةٌ نَوَاقِضُ: الْخَامِسَةُ:

مَنْ أَبْغَضَ شَيْئًا مِمَّا جَاءَ بِهِ الرَّسُولُ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ

**"Know that the things which nullify one's Islām are ten: The fifth one: Whoever hates something that the Messenger of Allāh came with, even if he acts according to it, he has disbelieved."**

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَرَهُوا مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأَحْبَطَ أَعْمَلَهُمْ

**"That is because they hate that which Allāh has sent down (this Qur'an and Islāmic laws); so He has made their deeds fruitless."** [Muhammad (47):9]

So even if an individual decides reluctantly to implement the thing which he hates in Islām, this does not provide the individual with a safe haven from the fifth nullifier of Islām. So what about the case of the one who not only hates an aspect of Allāh's religion, but also refuses to act according to it?! So ferocious and untamed is Khan's hatred for the *niqāb* that the beast within (i.e. her abhorrence) refuses to be restrained in captivity. Therefore, the instant she finds a public figure that agrees with or shares her twisted sentiments, she is eagerly prepared to recruit them as an unconditional ally in her war on the *niqāb*. The evidence for this can be found in her following words:

**"...and am {sic} calling on the Government to follow the lead of French President Nicolas Sarkozy and ban the burkha in our country."**

We ask here: what needs to be conveniently forgotten or ignored, for a Muslim to feel comfortable with taking the French President, Nicolas Sarkozy as an ally in your crusade against Islām?

The possibility that you are taking an enemy of Islām as an ally who would love to see Islām fall in line <sup>12</sup> and then sheepishly herded towards the 'secular abattoir', either to be slaughtered or butchered until many of its integral parts are dismembered. Did not Allāh inform us in His Noble Book:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا عَدُوِّي وَعَدُوَّكُمْ أَوْلِيَاءَ  
تُلْقُونَ إِلَيْهِم بِالْمَوَدَّةِ وَقَدْ كَفَرُوا بِمَا جَاءَكُمْ مِنَ الْحَقِّ

**"O you who believe! Take not My enemies and your enemies (i.e. disbelievers and polytheists, etc.) as friends, showing affection towards them, while they have disbelieved in what has come to you of the truth (i.e. Islamic Monotheism, this Quran).."** [al-Mumtahinah (60):1]

On 11 April 2008, a 1993 nude photograph of Carla Bruni-Sarkozy was sold at an auction for US\$91,000 (€65, 0093) — more than 60 times the expected price. So lips remain tightly sealed when exposed to the fact that Sarkozy permitted a nude picture of his wife to be auctioned off to any Tom, Dick and Harry as public property, but women who cover for the sake of Allāh to obtain the pleasure of Allāh, not only have to suffer the humiliation of Khan's public outcries, but also her begging of the British Government to follow the lead of Nicolas Sarkozy. The

<sup>12</sup> Allāh says: **"And never will the Jews or Christians be pleased with you until you follow their religion."** [al-Baqarah (2):120] And Allāh says, **"Then is it the judgement of [the time of] ignorance they desire? But who is better than Allāh in judgement for a people who are certain [in faith]."** [al-Mā'idah (5): 50]



Prophet (*sallallāhu 'alayhi wassallam*) stated in a hadeeth which is found in Saheeh Muslim:

“Of the people of Hell there are two types that I have never seen:

Ones with whips like the tail of an ox and they flog people with them. The second one the women who would be naked but dressed, who are seduced to wrong paths and seduce others with their hair high like humps. These women will not enter Paradise and they will not smell its scent, although its fragrance can be perceived from such and such distance.”

Khan continues:

**My parents moved here from Kashmir in the 1960s. They brought with them their faith and their traditions - but they also understood that they were starting a new life in a country where Islam was not the main religion. My mother has always worn traditional Kashmiri clothes - the salwar kameez, a long tunic worn over trousers, and the *chador*, which is like a pashmina worn around the neck or over the hair. When she found work in England, she adapted her dress without making a fuss.<sup>13</sup> She is still very much a traditional Muslim woman, but she swims in a normal swimming costume and jogs in a tracksuit. I was born in this country, and my parents' greatest desire for me was that I would integrate and take advantage of the British education system. They wanted me to make friends at school, and be able to take part in PE lessons - not feel alienated and cut off from my peers. So at home, I wore the salwar kameez, while at school I wore a typical English school uniform. Now, to some fundamentalists, that made us not proper Muslims. Really? I have read the Koran. Nowhere in the Koran does it state that a woman's face and body must be covered in a layer of heavy black cloth. Instead, Muslim women should dress modestly, covering their arms and legs.**

Here we capture a glimpse of the fabric which weaves together the ideas and perceptions of Saira Khan. After years of taking her mother as a positive, unconditional role model, she tells us: **“When she found work in England, she adapted her dress without making a fuss.”** The first baffling thought that comes to mind is how she considers her mother's voluntary assimilation as a virtuous, admirable trait, despite it being at odds with a *sharia'* based principle. So is there really no “fuss” in going out of one's way to adapt ones dress to resemble the Kuffār? It was narrated that Ibn 'Umar said: “The Messenger of Allāh (*sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam*) said:

“Whoever imitates a people is one of them.”<sup>14</sup>

Al-Munāwī and al-'Alqamī said: i.e., dressing as they dress, following their way of life in clothes and some of the things they do. Shaykh ul-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah said in *Iqtidā as-Sirāt al-Mustaqeem*: “Imām Ahmad and others quoted this hadeeth as evidence.” This hadeeth at the very least implies that it is harām to imitate them, as Allāh says:

**“... And if any amongst you takes them [Jews and Christians] as Awliyā' [friends, helpers]], then surely, he is one of them...”**

We feel the most telling and revealing part of this current quote can be found in her words: **I was born in this country, and my parents' greatest desire for**

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<sup>14</sup> Narrated by Abū Dawūd, *al-Libās*, 3512. Al-Albānī said in Saheeh Abī Dawūd, (it is) hasan saheeh. (no. 3401).

**me was that I would...** be exposed to what Islām would consider a detrimental environment, which would lay the foundation for many of her secular thoughts, concepts and ideals, but this was also the object of her parents 'greatest desire' to 'integrate' during a delicate period of her life when she is considered most impressionable and easily influenced. We can witness the inevitable effect her environment has had on her when she herself says: **"I wanted my husband to look after me and be my equal, and I just had more in common with English men."**<sup>15</sup>

Are these following words: **"Instead, Muslim women should dress modestly, covering their arms and legs"**, a case of 'do as I say and not as I do', because quite frankly, Khan cannot even manage to adhere to this watered-down definition of how a Muslim women should cover, all proven by a clip from *The Apprentice*, wherein she is displaying her cleavage!<sup>16</sup> How can we accept the opinion of a woman who cannot even remain faithful to her own descriptions of correct Islamic attire?! This is where we will take the opportunity to address Saira' Khan's inherent challenge:

**"I have read the Koran. Nowhere in the Koran does it state that a woman's face and body must be covered in a layer of heavy black cloth."**

After digesting this quote, one must first wonder if Saira Khan is a member of the Qur'ānite Cult 'the Submitters'<sup>17</sup> due to her apparent refusal to mention the other half of Allāh's revelation (i.e. the Sunnah). If this is not the case, then we must conclude that her convenient refusal to mention the Sunnah, as an independent authority in Islam, is only done because she knows that her above challenge will never see the light of day. Therefore, she does what so many Muslim modernists do, and that is to feign ignorance regarding the status of the Sunnah, and then move to shackle the Muslims to the ambiguity contained in certain verses of the Qur'ān, hoping by this to beguile her audience and establish her postulations.<sup>18</sup> Before we meet Khan's implicit challenge, it is imperative that we deactivate the loaded parts of her implicit assertions, because the challenge presupposes things that are either not true or are not really up for debate:

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2008/mar/15/familyandrelationships.family>

<sup>16</sup> 4:11: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SdyAUp2-ORw&feature=related> – **warning: clip contains women inadequately covered Islamically!!**

<sup>17</sup> The Submitters are followers of the late Rashad Khalifa, a man who claimed to be a Messenger of Allāh. This claim in itself is sufficient to remove the Submitters from Islām.

<sup>18</sup> Allāh says, **"It is He who has sent down to you, [O Muhammad], the Book; in it are verses [that are] precise – they are the foundation of the Book – and others unspecific. As for those in whose hearts is deviation [from truth], they will follow that of it which is unspecific, seeking discord and seeking an interpretation [suitable to them]. And no one knows its [true] interpretation except Allāh. But those firm in knowledge say, "We believe in it. All [of it] is from our Lord." And no one will be reminded except those of understanding."** [Āli-Imrān (3):7] And Allāh says, **"O you who have believed, obey Allāh and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. And if you disagree over anything, refer it to Allāh and the Messenger, if you should believe in Allāh and the Last Day. That is the best [way] and best in result."** [an-Nisā (4):59] And Allāh says, **"But no, by your Lord, they will not [truly] believe until they make you, [O Muhammad], judge concerning that over which they dispute among themselves and then find within themselves no discomfort from what you have judged and submit in [full, willing] submission."** [an-Nisā (4):65]

Has she really read the "Koran"<sup>19</sup>, we mean here the Arabic Qur'ān? Or has she read a translation which strives to convey the meanings and interpretations of the Arabic Qur'ān?

Along with reading the Qur'ān, has she read the Books of *tafāseer*, which provide an accurate and scholarly understanding of the meanings of the Qur'ān? Why is it that whenever a person has some hostility towards an aspect of Islam, they always "do away with" the Sunnah and classical and traditional explanation of the verses of Allāh?

Why is Khan arguing here against the obligation of the niqāb when she makes it patently clear that she 'abhors' it, regardless of its ruling? What if the Qur'ān was to indicate the *niqāb* as a recommended practise, which brings a woman closer to Allāh; would she cease her hate-filled crusade against it? We think not!

Who said the outer garments worn by Muslim women must be only black?!

Who said the outer garments must be only heavy?!

Allāh says in His Noble Book:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لِّأَزْوَاجِكَ وَبَنَاتِكَ وَنِسَاءِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ يُدْنِينَ  
عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ جَلْبَابٍ ذَلِكَ أَدْنَىٰ أَنْ يُعْرَفْنَ فَلَا يُؤْذَيْنَ وَكَانَ  
اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا

**"O Prophet! Tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to draw their Jalabeeb over their bodies. That will be better that they should be known so as not to be annoyed. And Allāh is Ever Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."** [Al-Ahzaab (33):59]

Ibn 'Abbās, who the Messenger (*sallallāhu 'alayhi wassallam*) made du'a for by saying: "O Allāh! Teach him (the knowledge of) the Book", said about the above mentioned verse:

**"Allāh commanded the believing women that when they come out of their homes for necessity, they cover their faces – from the top of their heads (downwards), with jilbābs, and that they expose (only) one eye."**

So does Khan understand the Book of Allāh better than the one who Allāh's Messenger (*sallallāhu 'alayhi wassallam*) made personal du'a for?! Shaykh Muhammad bin Sālih al-'Uthaymeen wrote in his essay<sup>20</sup> regarding this statement of Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās:

**"The interpretation of this Companion is a decisive proof even to the point that some scholars say this saying has the ruling of marfoo' (raised) to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him)."**

Then he goes on to say:

**"When the verse (33:59) was revealed, Umm Salamah said: "The Ansāri women came out of their homes, walking as if they had crows**

<sup>19</sup> It is strange for a Muslim to write the word 'Qur'an' with a 'K' and not with a 'Q'. This style of writing is prevalent in Oriental studies.

<sup>20</sup> An Essay on the Hijab by Shaykh Muhammad bin Sālih al-'Uthaymeen.



**on their heads due to the tranquillity, and they were dressed in black garments."**

And Abu Ubaydah as-Salmānī and others mention that:

**The believing women used to cast their jilbābs from (over) the top of their heads downwards, to the point that nothing was visible except their eyes, for the purpose of seeing the road. "**

Shaykh Zayd al-Madkhalī says regarding the same verse:<sup>21</sup>

**This refers to whatever is unable to be concealed, such as the outer garment like the Jilbāb, the veil and so on. Or it may refer to whatever becomes exposed from the woman unintentionally, due to some unintended cause, such as a strong wind or due to carrying an object, as well as whatever else a woman is pardoned for, if her face and hands become exposed due to it.**

Furthermore, it has been authentically reported on Ibn Mas'oud, with a chain of narration that bears the highest level of authenticity, what was meant by Allāh's statement: **"...except for that which is apparent from it"** is the (outer) garment. Allāh says:

**وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا**

**"And not to show off their adornment except only that which is apparent." [An-Nur (24):31]**

Ibn Katheer said:

**Muhammad bin Sīrīn said: 'I asked Ubaydah as-Salmānī about Allāh's statement: 'to draw their cloaks (veils) all over themselves' so he covered his face and (only) exposed his left eye.'**

Ibn al-Jawzī said concerning this verse:

**"It means that they must cover their heads and faces so that they may be known as free women. The definition of a Jilbāb is a loose outer garment, as has been stated by Ibn Qutaybah."**

And Abu Hayyān al-Andalusī said in *al-Bahr al-Baseet*:

**"It consists of their entire bodies. Or the word 'alaihinna (over themselves) could mean: (just) their faces, since the Days of Ignorance, the thing that the women used to expose was their face."**

Abū Su'ood said:

**"The Jilbāb is a garment that is wider than a khimār but less than a ridā (outer-cloak). A woman wraps it upon her head and leaves hanging what falls to her breast. What is meant by the verse is that they should cover their faces and bodies with it, if they become uncovered due to some reason."**

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<sup>21</sup> The Obligation of Veiling the Hands and Face

It is reported that Imām as-Suddī said:

**“She should cover one of her eyes, her forehead and the other (lower) portion of her face, except one eye.”**

So based on this we say:

O brothers in Islām, look at the statements of the scholars of Tafseer from our pious predecessors, whose eyes Allāh enlightened to see the truth and whose hearts He filled with faith and understanding of their Lord’s Book, which He sent down as a guide and a cure.

Produced before you are verses of the Qur’ān adorned with scholarly opinion, which all point in the same direction when providing a definitive understanding. Under normal circumstances, the above evidences would suffice a sceptical Muslim. However, we strongly believe that Saira Khan does not fall under the category of ‘normal circumstances’ – so let us provide some more evidences from the Authentic Sunnah.

Imaam al-’Uthaymeen writes:

“After commanding the women to come out of the *musallāa* (place of prayer) for ‘Eid, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) was asked by one of the women (Umm Ātiyah): “O Messenger of Allāh! If a woman has no veil, is there any sin if she does not come out (on ‘Eid day)?” The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) said: “*Let her sister (in Islam) cover her with her jilbāb (veil), and the women should participate in the good deeds and in the religious gatherings of the believers.*””

This hadith is a proof that the customary practice of the Sahābiyāt (female companions) was that no one from among them would go out of her home, except that she had a *Jilbāb* on, and that she would not leave her home without it on. This is why they informed the Messenger of Allāh about the restriction after he had commanded them to come out (of their homes) for the ‘Eid Prayer. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) solved this problem for them by telling them that one of them could cover the other with her *jilbāb*. So he did not allow them to come out in public without the *jilbāb*. And this is considering that the attendance of the ‘Eid prayer at the *musallāa* is prescribed and obligated for men and women. Then Khan says:

**“Many of my adult British Muslim friends cover their heads with a headscarf - and I have no problem with that. The burkha is an entirely different matter.<sup>22</sup> It is an imported Saudi Arabian tradition, and the growing number of women veiling their faces in Britain is a sign of creeping radicalisation, which is not just regressive, it is oppressive and downright dangerous. The burkha is an extreme practice. It is never right for a woman to hide behind a veil and shut herself off from people in the community. But it is particularly wrong in Britain, where it is alien to the mainstream culture for someone to walk around wearing a mask.”<sup>23</sup>**

<sup>22</sup> Yet Khan has not defined what a “Burkha” actually is? We are still waiting for her definition of what it is!

<sup>23</sup> Allāh says, “**And if you ask them, they will surely say, “We were only conversing and playing.” Say, “Is it Allāh and His verses and His Messenger that you were mocking?” Make no excuse; you have disbelieved after your belief. If We pardon one faction of you – We will punish another faction because they were criminals.**”

We are given the impression here that Khan has a problem with the 'burkha' because **"it is an imported Saudi Arabian tradition"**. This leads us to believe that she just hates it because it is an imported item and not a native custom or tradition. However, when we skip back to the start of her sentence, she tells us that she doesn't mind her 'British' (that word again!) "Muslim friends covering their heads with a headscarf". But hold on a sec, isn't the headscarf still an imported tradition from the lands of the Muslims?!

The term 'regressive' informs us that the wearing of the niqāb/burkha is a backward step for the development of Muslim women. But before we, as Muslims, exploit the word 'regressive' should not we at least check the accuracy of the moral compass we are using to gauge our moral bearings? Is it the Qur'ān and the authentic Sunnah that provides a Muslim with the correct moral coordinates or is it western civilisation, based upon cultural relativism and status quos, which dictate to a Muslim the definition of regressive and oppressive?<sup>24</sup>

Exactly why is it **"downright dangerous"** for a woman to veil? Is it because she will be refused every feminist dream to compete against her nemesis (man) on the show *The Apprentice*?<sup>25</sup> Khan then states:

**"The veil restricts women. It stops them achieving their full potential in all areas of their life, and it stops them communicating. It sends out a clear message: 'I do not want to be part of your society.' Every time the burkha is debated, Muslim fundamentalists bring out all these women who say: 'It's my choice to wear this.' Perhaps so - but what pressures have been brought to bear on them? The reality, surely, is that a lot of women are not free to choose. Girls as young as four are wearing the hijab to school: that is not a freely made choice. It stops them taking part in education and reaching their potential, and the idea that tiny children need to protect their modesty is abhorrent. And behind the closed doors of some Muslim houses, countless young women are told to wear the hijab and the veil. These are the girls who are hidden away, they are not allowed to go to university or choose who they marry. In many cases, they are kept down by the threat of violence.**

**The burkha is the ultimate visual symbol of female oppression. It is the weapon of radical Muslim men who want to see Sharia law on Britain's streets, and would love women to be hidden, unseen and unheard. It is totally out of place in a civilised country. Precisely because it is impossible to distinguish between the woman who is choosing to wear a burkha and the girl who has been forced to cover herself and live behind a veil, I believe it should be banned."**

First of all, it seems that Khan's gripe is often with misogynist Asian culture of which the enforcement of a particular dress code, which may or may not be

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**The hypocrite men and hypocrite women are of one another. They enjoin what is wrong and forbid what is right and close their hands. They have forgotten Allāh, so He has forgotten them [accordingly]. Indeed, the hypocrites – it is they who are the defiantly disobedient. Allāh has promised the hypocrite men and hypocrite women and the disbelievers the fire of Hell, wherein they will abide eternally. It is sufficient for them. And Allāh has cursed them, and for them is an enduring punishment."** [at-Tawbah (9):65-68]

<sup>24</sup> Allāh says, **"This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favour upon you and have approved for you Islām as your religion."** [al-Mā'idah (5):3]

<sup>25</sup> Khan tells us in her own words: "I think I am a strong person and I am equal to any man out there." Which translates psychologically as: "I have a gender complexity."

Islamic, is only one aspect, yet this leads her to have qualms with Islām which she thinks supports such cultural practices. This may have been *her* shared experience with other girls from *her* ethno-culture, but she cannot now claim to be speaking for all Muslim girls. This is also why she does not use the term "niqab" but "burkha". "Burqa", or "purdah", as it's more commonly known in the Indian sub-continent, is an Irano-Afghan and Indo-Pak concept which does *not* exactly correlate with the Islamic concept of *hijāb*. Its origins are more to do with the Shia holding that women have no real souls and Hindus believing what they believe about women, than with Islamic modesty. Indo-Pak Barwelī women-loathing 'Islam' is very much influenced both by the neo-Shia Irano-Afghan Muslims who dominated the region and the Hindu masses whom they dominated. The point is, Khan probably doesn't know where "purdah/burqa" ends and where hijab starts.

Secondly, Lauren Boothe also wore the niqāb for the first time a couple of years back and described the experience as very liberating and far from horrid. Should the *niqāb* be banned because of SK's negative experience? How would this be just and fair if at the same time it would deny women the positive experience that Lauren Boothe wrote about?

Thirdly, exactly how does the veil stop a practising Muslim woman from fulfilling her potential in life? How does a piece of cloth over the face inhibit her from achieving many of her goals and objectives in life?<sup>26</sup> Would not the above accusation depend upon what set of values and concepts your heart fights for? If you are a zealous supporter of unconditional gender equality, free-mixing and other concepts and ideals which are at odds with the teachings of Islām, then of course the niqāb, and many other aspects of Islām, will become direct obstacles in your pursuit to attain what your heart yearns and longs for. However, if your life is grounded upon the ideals and concepts which emanate from Islām and you find your heart at harmony with these concepts, and you comprehend the beauty and wisdom behind the different but highly compatible natures of the sexes, and you understand the dangers which are associated with free-mixing, then never will a true Muslim woman be deceived into believing her potential in life is obstructed because she lacks the social freedoms of western women. So it all depends upon which world you champion and fight for.<sup>27</sup> If you compete in an arena which necessitates that you either shed your femininity or debase your femininity, then without doubt, you will have to do away with many teachings of Islām in order to secure your objective. The simple fact is the niqab presents another obstacle for Khan to hurdle in her desperation to cross the line of acceptance.

We tried to think of ways of how a piece of cloth over a woman's face **'stops them communicating,'** but unfortunately we couldn't produce a single example to merit this baseless claim. Something connected to the *niqāb* would have to prevent the mouth from moving to warrant any investigation into Khan's absurd claim. To be honest and frank, these words are constructed from the material of desperation. Does the *niqāb* decode the message **'I do not want to be part of your society.'** Or would it be more truthful and accurate to say that the *niqāb* conveys the clear message 'I do not mind being a part of this society as long as I can maintain my Muslim identity'? Should we translate the external message found in the bizarre attire of Goths and Punks to mean **'I do not want to be part of your society'** also? Is not this society, based on the ideals of

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<sup>26</sup> Allāh says, **"And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me."** [adh-Dhāriyāt (51):56]

<sup>27</sup> Allāh says, **"Say, "Indeed, my prayer, my rites of sacrifice, my living and my dying are for Allāh, Lord of the worlds."** [al-An'aam (6):162]

democracy, meant to cater for diversity? Surely what is true for a woman dressed in black is true for a Goth dressed in black! And our ultimate question would be; who gets to dictate the exact amount of integration one needs to absorb to be considered a part of any society? Khan says:

**"President Sarkozy is absolutely right to say: 'If you want to live here, live like us.' He went on to say that the burkha is not a religious sign, 'it's a sign of subservience, a sign of debasement...' <sup>28</sup> In our country, we cannot accept that women be prisoners behind a screen, cut off from all social life, deprived of all identity.' So what should we do in Britain? For decades, Muslim fundamentalists, using the human rights laws, have been allowed to get their own way. It is time for ministers and ordinary British Muslims to say, 'Enough is enough'. For the sake of women and children, the Government must ban the wearing of the hijab in school and the burkha in public places. To do so is not racist, as extremists would have us believe. After all, when I go to Pakistan or Middle Eastern countries, I respect the way they live. <sup>29</sup> Two years ago, I wore a burkha for the first time for a television programme. It was the most horrid experience. It restricted the way I walked, what I saw, and how I interacted with the world. It took away my personality. I felt alienated and like a freak. It was hot and uncomfortable, and I was unable to see behind me, exchange a smile with people, or shake hands. If I had been forced to wear a veil, I would certainly not be free to write this article. <sup>30</sup> Nor would I have run a marathon, become an aerobics teacher or set up a business."**

Firstly, if one believes that Sarkozy is **"absolutely right"** to say: **'If you want to live here, live like us,'** this would mean by default that one believes the Messenger of Allāh (*sallallāhu 'alayhi wassallam*) was absolutely wrong to say: *"Whoever imitates a people is one of them."* We say this because both cannot be right since both champion opposing philosophies. If you believe that Sarkozy is **"absolutely right"** to demand that Muslims assimilate and absorb the culture of people of another worldview, then this by necessity obliges you to believe that Allāh's messenger (*sallallāhu 'alayhi wassallaam*) was 'absolutely' wrong to warn us about the realities of *tashabbuh* with the disbelievers. <sup>31</sup> Sometimes we really need to analyse the words that we articulate, because inadvertently we may suggest a lot more than what we originally intended.

Secondly, the problem with this statement **"If you want to live here, live like us,"** is that those who say it seem to have forgotten their own history! For when the French, who seem to have historical amnesia when it comes to their own interactions with the Muslim world, were in Africa they forced the Muslims to become French on their own African lands?! So much for **"if you want to live here, live like us"** the French historically have been guilty of rather practising: **"if you live outside of France, live like us!"** A clear assimilation policy as part

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<sup>28</sup> So we ask Sarkozy: is it also a debasement to women and a sign of subservience to men for a wife of a head of state to auction off nude pictures of herself for fame and status??! So we say to Sarkozy and his ilk: We do not take advice from those whose own kith and kin consist of infected AIDS victims, prostitutes and those who sell their bodies for money and fashion; give us the "Burqa" any day before that! Clean up your own house, as it were (!), before attempting to accuse the Muslims!

<sup>29</sup> But Khan has just mocked them for their shopping habits, clothing, Islamic beliefs, practices and has insinuated that they are "uncivilised", so if this is respect from Khan she has a very funny way of showing it!

<sup>30</sup> What? What correlation is there between wearing a so-called Burkha, by which we think Khan means the niqāb and jilbāb, and not being able to write an article?!

<sup>31</sup> Allāh says, **"Whatever the Messenger gives you take it, and whatever he forbids you, stay away from."** [al-Hashr (59):7]



of the '*mission civilisatrice*', and as other academics such as Joan Wallach-Scott have highlighted, the contemporary French aversion to Islamic dress has to be understood in light of French history. Laila Lalami stated in an article entitled *Beyond the Veil* on 21 November 2007:

**When the French government invaded Algeria, in 1830, it started a vast campaign of military "pacification," which was quickly followed by the imposition of French laws deemed necessary for the civilizing mission to succeed. Women were crucial to that enterprise. In articles, stories and novels of the day, Algerian women were universally depicted as oppressed, and so in order for civilization truly to penetrate Algeria, the argument went, the women had to cast off their veils. General Bugeaud, who was charged with administering the territory in the 1840s, declared, "The Arabs elude us because they conceal their women from our gaze." Algerian men, meanwhile, were perceived to be sexual predators who could not control their urges unless their womenfolk were draped in veils. Colonization would solve this by bringing the light of European civilization to Arab males, who, after a few generations of French rule, would learn to control their urges... As late as 1958, French wives of military officers, desperate to stop support for the FLN, which spearheaded the war of liberation against France, staged a symbolic "unveiling" of Algerian women at a pro-France rally in the capital of Algiers. Decades later, millions of French citizens with ancestral roots in North Africa are being told much the same thing: in order to be French, they must "integrate" by giving up that which makes them different-Islam.**

Joan Wallach-Scott states in her book *Parité! Sexual Equality and the Crisis of French Universalism*:

**From the early days of colonial settlement, French administrators had distinguished between Algerians who were assimilable and those – Muslims-who were not. "If we have one duty in Algeria, it is to combat Islam, our eternal enemy, in all its manifestations," wrote the viscount Caix de Saint Aymour. France's "civilising mission" consisted in bringing secular values to North Africa, reclaiming the territory that was once European and had been lost to Islam centuries before...Islam remains for many French, if not an "eternal enemy," then at least antithetical to French republican values....Those perceived to be followers of Islam are thus, by definition, irreducibly different, outside the nation, ineligible for citizenship.<sup>32</sup>**

So let's refer to what some of the "civilised French" leaders have stated about Muslims before in history: Lieutenant-Colonel de Montagnac, one of the French conquerors of Algeria, wrote on 15 March 1843 in a letter to a friend:

**"All populations which do not accept our conditions must be despoiled. Everything must be seized, devastated, without age or sex distinction: grass must not grow any more where the French army has put the foot. Who wants the end wants the means, whatever may say our philanthropists. I personally warn all good militaries which I have the honour to lead that if they happen to bring me a living Arab, they will receive a beating with the flat of the saber... This is how, my dear friend, we must do war against Arabs: kill all men over the age of**

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<sup>32</sup> Joan Wallach-Scott, *Parité! Sexual Equality and the Crisis of French Universalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), pp.22-23.

**fifteen, take all their women and children, load them onto naval vessels, send them to the Marquesas Islands or elsewhere. In one word, annihilate all that will not crawl beneath our feet like dogs.”**<sup>33</sup>

Camille Bonora-Waisman stated in *Issues in Democracy and Political Stability, 1988-1995*:

**In contrast with the Moroccan and Tunisian protectorates, Algeria was made an integral part of France and became a colony of settlement for more than one million Europeans... under colonial rule, Algerians encountered France's 'civilising mission' only through the plundering of lands and colonial apartheid society...**<sup>34</sup>

Debra Kelly stated in *Autobiography and Independence: Selfhood and Creativity in North African Postcolonial Writing in French*:

**...[the] *senatus-consulte* of 1865 stipulated that all the colonised indigenous were under French jurisdiction, i.e., French nationals subjected to French laws, but it restricted citizenship only to those who renounced their Muslim religion and culture. There was an obvious split in French legal discourse: a split between nationality and citizenship which established the formal structures of a political apartheid encouraging the existence of 'French subjects' disenfranchised, without any rights to citizenship, treated as objects of French law and not citizens".**<sup>35</sup>

Olivier le Cour Grandmaison, Lecturer in Political Science at Evry-Val d'Essonne University, stated in an article entitled *Liberty, Equality and Colony*:

**"On 29 December of that year General Thomas Bugeaud, just appointed governor of the colony, arrived in Algeria, marking the real start of the country's conquest. The means employed were atrocious. The army massacred or deported villagers *en masse*; raped women and took children hostage; stole harvests and livestock and destroyed orchards. Louis-Philippe, and subsequently Napoleon III, awarded their generals with promotion. The careers of several field marshals and a minister of war owed a great deal to the piles of Algerian and Kabyle corpses..."**

Olivier le Cour Grandmaison continues:

**"De Tocqueville wrote this in October 1841 after visiting Algeria. He supported colonisation in general, and in particular the colonisation of Algeria. As well as making two trips to the country, he addressed the matter in letters, in several speeches on France's foreign affairs, and in two official reports presented to the National Assembly in March 1847 on behalf of an *ad hoc* commission. He repeatedly commented on and analysed the issue in his voluminous correspondence. In short, De Tocqueville developed a theoretical basis for French expansion in North Africa.**

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<sup>33</sup> See Lieutenant-colonel de Montagnac, *Lettres d'un soldat*, (Plon, Paris, 1885) republished by Christian Destremau, 1998, p. 153.

<sup>34</sup> See Camille Bonora-Waisman, *France and the Algerian Conflict: Issues in Democracy and Political Stability, 1988-1995* (Ashgate Publishing, 2003), p. 3.

<sup>35</sup> See Debra Kelly, *Autobiography And Independence: Selfhood and Creativity in North African Postcolonial Writing in French* (Liverpool University Press, 2005), p. 43.

He collected an impressive library on the subject for he planned to write a book on India and British colonisation, comparing it with French achievements in what was then known as the Regency of Algiers. He even studied the Koran, sharply concluding that the religion of Muhammad was "the main cause of the decadence ... of the Muslim world." His contemporaries were therefore right to see De Tocqueville as an important figure in modern colonialism, to which he devoted much time and energy between 1837 and 1847.

French specialists, however, have little to say on the subject. They either pretend not to know about his writings on the subject or they gloss over their idol's positions to avoid damaging his image as a liberal and a democrat (3) - focusing on works such as *Democracy in America* and *The Old Regime and the Revolution* is more conducive to academic canonisation than detailed examination of his works on Algeria. These texts, which have all been published, do not seem to have made a lasting impression on the eminent academics who explore De Tocqueville's ideas and marvel at the subtlety of his analysis. Yet the texts provide an interesting insight into some of his opinions. They are also instructive about the early years of the French conquest and how the colonial state was first set up and organised. De Tocqueville emerges as an advocate of "total domination" in Algeria and "devastation of the country" (4).

Le Cour Grandmaison then states:

**"De Tocqueville clearly approved the methods of General Bugeaud and defended them publicly on several occasions. Bugeaud's approach consisted of laying waste to Algeria and seizing anything that might be useful for the army - "using war to keep the war alive", as General Lamoricière put it. He drove the native population further and further back to secure complete control of conquered territory. Once these objectives had been achieved, through mass terror, settlements were established, making it impossible for the original population to return."**

De Tocqueville did not rely exclusively on military might. He intended to protect and extend expropriation by the rule of law. He therefore advocated setting up special courts, based on what he himself called a "summary" procedure, to carry out massive expropriation for the benefit of French and other European settlers who would thus be able to purchase land at an attractive price and live in villages that the colonial government had equipped with fortifications, schools, churches and even fountains. De Tocqueville was apparently concerned about the material and moral welfare of the colonisers. He recommended that they should form armed militia, led by an army officer, to defend the population and their possessions. The network formed by the various villages would secure their hold on the conquered territory. The local people, who had been driven out by the army and robbed of their land by the judges, would gradually die out.

The French colonial state, as he conceived it and as it took shape in Algeria, was a two-tiered organisation, quite unlike the regime in mainland France. It introduced two different political and legal systems which, in the last analysis, were based on racial, cultural and religious distinctions. According to De Tocqueville, the system that should apply to the colonisers would enable them alone to hold property and travel freely, but would deprive them of any form of political freedom, which should be suspended in Algeria. "There should therefore be two quite distinct legislations in Africa, for there are two very separate communities. There is absolutely nothing to prevent us treating

Europeans as if they were on their own, as the rules established for them will only ever apply to them" (7).

It could hardly be clearer. The people from glorious, enlightened Europe were entitled to rights. As for the "barbarians", there was no question of their enjoying equality, freedom or the universal rule of law. Nor did De Tocqueville set any time limit for this arrangement. Predictably, the system that applied to the Arab and Kabyle populations resulted in a permanent state of war, designed to keep them under the brutal yoke of the colonisers and an all-powerful government."<sup>36</sup>

Up to a million Algerians lost their lives during the brutal and savage French conquest of Algeria and this is a history which up to this day the French try to cover up in order to promote a **"positive colonial influence"** of the French in Algeria!!? So are those with such a history of brutality against Islām really in a suitable position to tell Muslims about "civilisation"? And as for **"getting out of the country"** then with such a proposition many would rather leave their godforsaken country which claims to champion "freedom, equality and liberty" yet thinks it can do so by brute force, not to mention its dire economic situation in comparison with the economic growth that is found within certain Muslim countries! Sarkozy's comments are therefore a mere continuation of the colonial view of Islām representing Oriental despotism which has to be done away with.

Elizabeth Shakman-Hurd states in her book *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations*:

**"There are numerous examples of the consolidation of the French republican identity as laicist, scientific, and rational through the representation of Algerian Muslims as overly religious, backward and irrational. Silverstein argues that "Islam served as the primary trope for explaining two opposed characteristics of the observed Arab personality: one the one hand, their bellicose, hostile nature attributable to religious fanaticism; and on the other hand, their inveterate laziness, resulting from their resultant fatalism." Patricia Lorcin notes that "the spectre of Islam as a belligerent religion was ever-present throughout the 130 years of French occupation, and the French invariably imputed to Islam all forms of opposition to their rule." Going back to the original sources, Auguste Pomel, in his 1871 treatise on the "indigenous races of Algeria and the role reserved for them for their aptitudes" wrote that "Mahometism appears specially adapted to societies whose social evolution arrested in the phase of barbarous patriarchy..a theocratic status of which absolutism is the pivot and fatalism the measure." Muslims were portrayed by many French writers and administrators as unreceptive to change and hostile to progress. As Silverstein notes, "French administrators perceived this essential religiosity of Arabs as an inherent stumbling block to their administrative and legal incorporation into the French nation."**<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Refer to article here: <http://mondediplo.com/2001/06/11torture2>

<sup>37</sup> See Elizabeth Shakman-Hurd, *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), p.56. For more on this refer to: Richard S. Fogarty, "Between Subjects and Citizens" in Paul R. Spickhard (ed.), *Race and Nation: Ethnic Systems in the Modern World* (New York: Routledge, 2005), pp.179-182. Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2006), pp.26-43

Thirdly, Khan, feeling a false sense of security and contentment, continues to quote Sarkozy as an authority when she says **"the burkha is not a religious sign, 'it's a sign of subservience, a sign of debasement...'"** As proven by the *tafāseer* of certain verses and authentic narrations above, the burkha/niqāb is in fact a religious sign. We suggest that people bring more than their own hatred and contempt as a form of evidence to prove that the *niqāb* has no place in Islām. Hatred against something which could possibly be Islamic, without first showing exactly why it has no basis in Islām, proves nothing but an argument devoid of objectivity, and possesses all the hallmarks of a point fashioned from bigotry. It would provide a lot more integrity to her position if she could prove within the boundaries of Islām exactly why the burkha/niqāb is not a religious sign instead just bringing her emotions as a source of reference.

So what about the usage of the word 'subservient'? Do they mean subservient in the sense that 'fundamentalist' Muslim men find women useful to promote a purpose or end? What if we were to take the same word with the same definition and see if we can align the word with much of what falls under the guise of western liberation? Is not the multi-billion pound pornography industry, which debases hordes of women, used to promote a vulgar purpose or end? How about prostitution, escort services, modelling and females exploited to advertise a product, are these not services used to subjugate women to promote a male coordinated purpose or end?

Let us say, for arguments sake, that 'fundamentalist' Muslim men were conspiring to make all Muslim women subservient to man's will. Why would a fundamental part of their scheme hinge on the complete covering of women, keeping in mind that the very thing which men covet most is the beauty carved into the faces and bodies of women?! Wouldn't this be counterproductive and against man's proclivity to women and their inherent beauty? We would hazard a guess here and say that given man's past record and his violent love for feminine beauty, a more plausible part of his grand scheme would be to disrobe the woman to satisfy his carnivorous sexual appetite and, wait a minute, are we not witnessing this depraved phenomenon transpiring before our very eyes under the guise of "democracy" and "social liberties"?!

So here we have a Muslim woman who is not only the mouthpiece for various tabloid papers, whose owners have built their empires on the back of sexual exploitation of women, but who champions the speech of a president, who casually permits the auctioning of domestic pornography (under the guise of "art"), and then she has the audacity to direct the finger at the Ummah of Muhammad (sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam) and accuse them of the oppressive subjugation of women! How brainwashed and disorientated must one be to not only buy into western man-made concepts of women's liberation and warped definitions of subjugation, but to also champion such as the true liberation of women? Whenever one needs a reminder of a working definition of 'subjugation', all one needs to do is to step into a local newsagent and allow the sordid contents of the magazine shelves to clear up his/her lack of clarity.

Perhaps Khan is arguing the less extreme definition of the word 'subservient' (if there is one) and she intends by this that women should not be submissive to men in any form or shape and that they should stand as their equals in all domains. If this is the case, then we must first ask a series of questions before we open the doors to debate: From which source does she derive her understanding of equality between the sexes? Does she intend equality between sexes from an Islamic or western concept? If she is debating, as a Muslim woman, with the western definition of equality, then right there and then we can highlight her disjointed way of thinking. How can any Muslim woman bring western man-made concepts into a perfect religion (i.e. Islam) and then debate



them as if they were ever present?! However, let us provide Khan with the honour of good suspicion and move on the premise that she sincerely believes that Islam and western ideals are synonymous. Allāh the Most High says in His Book:

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى  
بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ

**"Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allāh has made one of them to excel the other, and because they spend (to support them) from their means....." [An-Nisaa (4):34]**

The Classical scholar of *Tafseer* al-Qurtubi said concerning this verse:

**"The words 'Men are the protectors and maintainers of women' mean that they spend on them and protect them, and also that they (men) are the rulers and governors, and the ones who go on military campaigns, and none of these are the role of women."** <sup>38</sup>

Ibn Katheer also said regarding this verse:

**"It means the man is in charge of the woman; he is her leader, the ruler over her who disciplines her if she goes astray." "Because Allāh has made one of them to excel the other" means, because men are superior to woman, and a man is better than a woman. Hence Prophethood was given only to men, as was the role of caliph, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) said: "No people will ever prosper who appoint a woman in charge of them."** <sup>39</sup>

So here we clearly understand, through this verse, that Allāh never intended to create the sexes "equal". However, He created them with separate roles in mind as to complement each other, culminating in both biological cogs to function as a whole. Imagine if all pieces of a jigsaw were all fashioned and cut out to resemble each other, what wholesome picture or image would one be able to construct? A male and a female are two contrasting pieces of the same jigsaw which connect together to make a whole, and within this whole does one find a true portrait of the beauty of these two distinct roles. Let us now provide Saira Khan with a proof from the Sunnah to prove clearly that the sexes are not equal. The Messenger of Allāh (sallallaahu alaihi wa sallam) said: "It was narrated that Abu Bakrah said: When the Messenger of Allāh (sallallaahu alaihi wa sallam) heard that the people of Persia had appointed the daughter of Chosroes as their queen, he said, **"No people will ever prosper who appoint a woman in charge of them."** <sup>40</sup>

Commenting on the hadith ash-Shawkānī said:

**"This indicates that women are not qualified to rule, and it is not permissible for people to appoint them as rulers, because they must avoid that which will cause them not to prosper."** <sup>41</sup>

In *al-Mawsoo'ah al-Fiqhiyyah* (vol.21, p.270) it says:

<sup>38</sup> Tafseer al-Qurtubi, vol.5, p.168.

<sup>39</sup> Tafseer Ibn Katheer, vol.1, p.492.

<sup>40</sup> Narrated by al-Bukhāri, 4163.

<sup>41</sup> *Nayl al-Awtār*, vol.8, p.305

**"The fuqaha' are agreed that one of the conditions of the position of caliph is that the holder should be male. The leadership of a woman is not valid, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) said: "No people will ever prosper who appoint a woman in charge of them." That is also so that he will be able to mix with men, to devote his time solely to dealing with affairs of state, and because this position involves handling very serious matters. The responsibility is great and this is a man's role."**

If there is a concept in Islam of equality, under what circumstances are we to understand it? The correct phrase which we are striving for is equality in terms of justice and equality through the recognition that both sexes have the shared ability to perform righteous good deeds. This is the equality which Islam recognises and strives for. Imām al-'Uthaymeen said while commenting on this myth of the sexes being "equal" (in the absolute and unrestricted sense):

**"Here we should note that there are some people who speak of 'equality' instead of 'justice', and this is a mistake. We should not say equality, because "equality" implies no differentiation between the two. Because of this unjust call for "equality", they started to ask, what is the difference between male and female?' So they made males and females the same, and then the communists said, 'What difference is there between ruler and subject? No one has any authority over anyone else, not even fathers and sons; the father has no authority over his son,' and so on. But if we say justice, which means giving each one that to which he or she is entitled, this misunderstanding no longer applies, and the word used is correct. Hence it does not say in the Qur'ān that Allāh enjoins equality, rather it says:**

**إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ**

**"Verily, Allāh enjoins Al-'Adl (i.e. justice)." [An-Nahl 16:90]**

Khan then goes on to inform us:

**"So what should we do in Britain? For decades, Muslim fundamentalists, using the human rights laws, have been allowed to get their own way. It is time for ministers and ordinary British Muslims to say, 'Enough is enough'."**

The hardest part of this statement was working out exactly where to start to untangle this mess. How about we start with **"Muslim fundamentalists, using the human rights laws, have been allowed to get their own way."** We say in response: Muslim 'fundamentalists' have been advocating the niqab/burkha for over 1400 years! So why are you starting your verbal assault a couple of decades ago? Are you scared that you are pulling at the thread that may undo the whole jumper (i.e. lead back to Allāh and His Messenger)? What is the defining barrier that prevents you from labelling those Muslim men before 20 years ago with disparaging titles such as 'fundamentalists' or 'extremists'? What human-rights laws were the Muslim men violating before the enactment of these so-called human rights laws?! Are we saying that man has finally (in the 21<sup>st</sup> century) been able to show the oppressive nature of Allāh's laws (and refuge from such a satanic thought with Allāh is sought) and now we should submit to human rights dictated by humans? The inconsistency of thought and of labelling is flabbergasting, to say the least.

So who are these 'ordinary British (that word again) **Muslims**' she calls on in her futile plot to declare 'Enough is enough'? Is it a fact that most 'ordinary Muslims' share her extreme point of view or is it a fact that she needs to convey this straw man plea to at least give the impression that the majority sides with her? What endeavours has she undertaken to statistically prove that the majority side with her? Also, is proof found at the feet of the people or does the sound-minded Muslim refer back to the Book of Allāh and the Sunnah to separate between the opinions of men and legislation? Here is where Khan steps up her emotional charge and initiates her plea with the phrase '**for the sake**' – that the government 'must' ban the niqab/burkha for the sake of woman and children. Let us get this straight: we must ban a practise which stems back over 1400 years because it violates human-rights dictated by a people who are the leaders in shirk, kufr, pornography, interest, alcohol, smoking, homosexuality and every other illicit evil. Is her hatred for the niqab/burkha so great, so over-whelming that it takes priority over all these pernicious abominations?! Khan then says:

**"We must unite against the radical Muslim men who love to control women. My message to those Muslims who want to live in a Talibanised society, and turn their face against Britain, is this: 'If you don't like living here and don't want to integrate, then what the hell are you doing here? Why don't you just go and live in an Islamic country?'"**

This study makes it patently clear that obedience of the Muslim woman to the Muslim man is in fact obedience to Allāh and His Messenger, since the command is traced back to the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. This study also makes it undeniably clear that the *niqāb* has a legislated position under the Sharia of Islam, and thus speaking against it or above it is to morally challenge something which was revealed by Allāh for the prosperity of His creation. So when Khan labels Muslim men, who love to implement what Allāh has revealed to them, as 'radical Muslim men', we will assume that Khan is grossly ignorant of the undeniable fact that the Messenger of Allāh and his Companions were the ones who strove with their lives and wealth to make the *niqāb* a symbol of man's liberation from his debased desire. We also have to assume that Khan is plagued by ignorance due to her attitude and her choice of words. Because how could a Muslim, who has been subjected to the incontrovertible evidences related to the *niqāb*, have the sheer audacity to use a non-Muslim newspaper as a spring-board to launch her pitiful attacks against a symbol of Islam?!

Khan seals her woeful article with a mangled piece of advice, directed to those who want to live in a 'Talibanised society' as opposed to a society which contradicts Islam in every conceivable moral issue. She tells us '**If you don't like living here and don't want to integrate, then what the hell are you doing here? Why don't you just go and live in an Islamic country?**' Again, let us suspend reality for an instant and imagine that we had read the above quote without thought of its author; what part of her alien words would set in motion the belief that such words were authored by a believer in Allāh and His Messenger?!

It is highly unethical for Saira Khan to merely claim to somehow represent Muslims and Islam in the UK and this is exacerbated by the fact that, as her article goes to show, there is a huge dearth of Islamic knowledge within her own understanding. If people were to implement Saira Khan's unqualified musings they will begin to jeopardise social cohesion as well as hinder helpful dialogue with practising Muslims in the UK. In part 11 of series 1 of *The Apprentice* which Khan appeared in, she was questioned for her self-confessed tendency to "bend rules", and indeed her urge therefore to modify what Islām says for her own desires is but a continuation of this self-confessed rule-bending which any Muslim

with a shred of scruples will reject outright. Hence, Khan's desperation for Muslims to integrate and incorporate the ways of a people, which contradict the ethos of Islam, are nothing but calls which make them vulnerable to the threat of Allāh's Messenger:

**"Whoever imitates a people is one of them."** <sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> A portion of a hadith reported by Ahmad [nos. 5114, 5115] from Ibn 'Umar with a hasan isnād. This portion itself is reported by Abu Dāwood [eng trans. 3/1127 no.4020] with a hasan isnād and it was declared saheeh by al-'Irāqee, al-Mughnee 'an Hamal al-Asfār [1/342]